

The Gospel of John

The Authority of Jesus

John 2:13-22

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION:

All of us have our pet peeves. Something that is extra annoying or upsetting to them. One of mine is when someone is sitting in front of a stop light and texting on the phone totally oblivious to anything around them. So, of course, when the light turns green they are so engrossed with their phone that they sit there. You honk and they finish their text, act annoyed that you bothered them, and go through a yellow light leaving everyone behind them to have to wait for the next green light.

Today's sermon will reveal what may have been one of Jesus' pet peeves.

If today's sermon were made into a movie it would begin something like this...

It would start with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding on the back of a young donkey. The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to sit on, and the multitudes came out to welcome Him, laying before Him their cloaks and the branches of palm trees. It was His final week before His arrest and crucifixion.

The following day Jesus went into the temple and saw one of His pet peeves.

It is early morning, but already the temple court is a bedlam of activity and noise.

Pause.

Among the tables of the moneychangers, the cages of doves and the stalls of cattle, people are crowding about, chatting with their friends, selecting a dove for sacrifice, getting their money from countries like Persia, Egypt or Greece exchanged into the sacred half-shekel of the sanctuary.

It's convenient. It's convenient to buy sacrifices on the spot instead of having to drag them from a distance. It is helpful to be able to exchange money bearing upon it the head of the emperor (a graven image and therefore unacceptable in the Temple) for the half-shekel.

And SO, convenient for all - and profitable to many - the purchase of temple sacrifices has become a normal business. Shrill voices - arguing - bickering - swearing angrily - the metallic tinkle of coins as they drop into the moneyboxes on the table...all the signs of greed can be heard.

There is no quiet time. There is no peace. No one can pray there.

Stooping down, Jesus picks up some binding cords which the merchants have discarded. And He quickly knots them into a whip. And then...the full fury of His wrath breaks. In a few long strides He is across the court.

Suddenly there is a lull in all of the confusion. Startled at the sudden quiet, we look up to find a strange yet familiar figure standing in the temple court area.

Pause.

It's Jesus! His face burning with intensity.

The merchants and money changers fall over one another to get away from the mad rush and the fire that they see in His eyes. There is something in His attitude - in that convicting silence in which He stands watching, which makes men just back away.

Picking up the boxes filled with money—scornfully and deliberately—He empties them on the stone floor... and coins spill with a clatter... rolling off in a 100 different directions.

Tables go crashing to the floor, and the moneychangers rush to gather up their coins from the filth. In their greed—made all the more frantic because of their fear—they grovel in the dirt, pouncing upon their money as the Man with the whip stands over them.

Pause

And THEN He drives out the terror-stricken cattle.

Not a voice is heard in protest... not a hand is raised against Him. Even the Temple guards only stand and watch helplessly.

His voice rings out. It sounds like the voice of God Himself...

It is written, *My house shall be called the house of prayer but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

Now if we were watching this in a movie, this might very well be the first scene. THEN you might see the caption "**Three Years Earlier**".

At this point we are going to rewind back three years. What we just described was at the end of Jesus' ministry, now we are rewinding to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Same time. Same place. At the temple during the Passover.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 2:13-22 (NASB)

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then

said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?”¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”²⁰ The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.²² So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Prayer

I. THE WRATH OF JESUS.

What Jesus did was an amazing act of authority. Jesus was angry. He was furious.

But why? What made Him so angry?

The Jewish Temple - where this incident occurred - was a magnificent structure. It was a huge facility, nearly 500 yards long and 400 yards wide. The outer court of the Temple was nearly the size of 48 college basketball courts.

The temple had been converted to a shopping mall. Pens of sheep, goats, doves, and other animals for sacrifice were everywhere. Moneychangers operated several of the tables.

And in one sense, these merchants provided a needed service. Worshippers had come from great distances and they were expected to offer animal sacrifices and financial gifts at the Temple. And these pilgrims found it...convenient because it would have been very hard to travel hundreds of miles with their sacrifice.

But what had started out as a convenience turned into a very profitable money making scheme. The priests and local politicians maintained strict control over the selling of merchandise in the temple area... and they often demanded a kickback. Once merchants had a corner on the market, they felt free to do as they pleased. Moneychangers would charge high fees to exchange shekels for pagan coins. Likewise, those who sold sacrificial animals would mark up their prices too.

And just in case, someone got the wise idea to set up a competing market elsewhere and undercut the temple sellers, the priests had that covered too. Before an animal could be sacrificed it had to pass a temple inspection. And the priests would simply reject any animal that didn't come from their licensed merchants.

The whole system was filled with corruption.

II. QUESTION OF AUTHORITY.

John 2:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” ¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

The Jews were questioning His authority.

Who are you? Or Who do You think You are? What gives you the authority to come in here and turn over our tables and drive out the sacrifices? After all these things have all been approved by the priesthood of God. Are you more important than them?

You know what authority is. It is the right to give orders and make decisions. The power or right to direct or control someone.

ILLUSTRATION:

I am sure as children we have all had a brother or sister or friend come and demand something of you. And you said "Why do I have to listen to you?" You are not my boss. But they may say "Well, **mom** said!" So then you listen up because mom **does** have the authority to tell you what to do.

This is what they were asking Jesus. What right do YOU have to come in here and disrupt out business. It was a question of the authority of Jesus Christ. That is still the most relevant issue even today. The whole ministry of Jesus from beginning to end was one of demonstrating His authority to give us direction in our life. Everything that He taught was taught as One having authority. His miracles were all displays of His great authority.

He calmed the winds and the waves and people asked "Who is this that even the winds and waves obey His voice?" You try that and see how much the winds and waves listen to you! But they listened to Christ. He even forgave sins. The religious leaders asked, "Who is this? Only God can forgive sins!

Yes indeed! Only God! That is a sufficient authority!

But they were accusing Him of blasphemy. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and He said "So that you might know that I have authority on earth to forgive sins", He told a lame man to arise, pick up his mat, and walk. It was a display of great authority.

The Jewish leaders asked "What sign do you show us since you do these things?" They were demanding of Him a sign. It was an unreasonable request because Jesus was condemning what ought to be condemned. They had taken the house of God and turned it into a commercial enterprise.

The request for a sign was also inappropriate. They were demanding that God give a sign right then and there. When God gave signs He gave them on His terms. Jesus never performed a miracle just to satisfy. This in itself was another sign of His authority. No human could MAKE Him do anything! His purpose for a miracle was to show that what He was teaching and doing was of God.

III. THE SIGN.

Look at Jesus' response here. He did not completely ignore their demand. He did not perform a miracle on the spot, but He did give them a sign that would come which would, in fact, be the most irrefutable proof that He DID have the authority that He claimed to have.

Listen to what He told them.

John 2:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸ The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

Jesus gives them a response, but it is a veiled response. Great claims require great evidence. Jesus made many great claims during His ministry, but as we will see He backed it up with great evidence.

He gave them an answer that was mysterious. An answer that they would have to ponder. It was an answer that many of them still misunderstood three years later. In fact they reported that He had told them that He was literally going to rebuild the temple in three days.

For those who believe that everything that Jesus said is to be taken literally ought to look at this verse.

But Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body. He is making a great claim here as well. He is claiming to be the temple of God. He has already called God "My Father".

John 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making **My Father’s** house a place of business.”

Now He calls Himself God's temple. The temple was the dwelling place of God. So He tells them “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**”

Jesus' death on the cross was a predetermined plan by the foreknowledge of God. His death was no accident. His death had been planned from all eternity.

John 2:21-22 (NASB)

²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The disciples remember and believed. We see evidence in this on the day of Pentecost in Peter's sermon to the Jews when the Holy Spirit arrived.

Acts 2:22-24 (NASB)

²² “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. ²⁴ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

The disciples DID remember and now they are telling the world about Jesus. Jesus went to the cross because God predetermined that He should. And this sign that Jesus gave to the Jews was the ultimate proof that He DID have the authority **BE** Who He claimed to be and to **DO** what He wanted to do!

Not only did Jesus say that the Jews would put Him to death, but He also said that in

three days He would raise from the dead.

Of course He was referring to His resurrection. What a prediction! **What a sign!** Who could predict that they would rise from the dead? This was the greatest sign that could have been given as proof of His Messiahship. This was the ultimate PROOF of His authority.

You asked for a sign. I will give you one. I will rise again from the dead on the third day after My crucifixion. If I do not arise, you need not believe that I am He. But if I do raise from the dead, you will be without excuse if you do not believe in Me.

In effect Jesus was staking His entire claim on one great sign and He did not let us down.

What imposter would stake his claims on something so far out of their reach? Out of the reach of all human power? Jesus said this is how you will know. I will rise from the dead.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, the disciples would not have believed Him. They would not have lived the rest of their lives serving Christ and be martyred for their faith.

CONCLUSION:

When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and declared His intention to be King, the first thing He did was to go into the Temple and clean house. He removed sin from the house of God.

WHY? Because the temple belonged to Him...it didn't belong to the priests, the politicians, or the merchants.

This carries another meaning to the Christian.

The temple in Jerusalem no longer exists. Thus God is no longer resides in the temple. The scriptures tell us that our bodies are now the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

And Jesus wants purity in that temple. And He has provided a way that we can have the sin cleaned out of our lives. It is through Jesus.

When you place your faith in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Him as your Lord and Master, and allow your body to be buried in the waters of baptism, God places His Holy Spirit inside of you.

That Spirit is the mark of His ownership.

And even more than that...His Spirit's presence inside you is God's declaration that every waking moment, you and I are temples of the most High God.

The Family of God.